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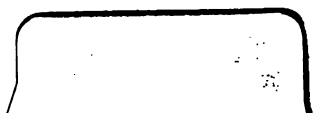
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# DARKNESS—DAWN—DAY;

OR,

## THE BATTLE OF LIFE.

A STORY.

BY

M. E. L.



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# DARKNESS—DAWN—DAY.

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## CHAPTER I.

“Look on my sorrows round !  
Mark well my furnace !  
Oh, what flames,  
What heats abound !”

HERBERT.

“SHALL we ever have as pleasant a home as this again, dear Marion ?” said Eleanor Heywood, addressing her younger sister, as both paused wearily in their work of packing, and rested for a moment on the packages standing around.

The dismantled apartment showed that this was no temporary change of abode, and a tinge of mournfulness in the speaker's tone told that that young heart was no stranger to anxious thought; while the broad perceptive brow indicated power of reflection on the possibilities of the future.

“Yes,” replied Marion with a determined energy of expression highly characteristic of the speaker; “why should we not? I mean to try hard for it, and thus bring to pass the dearest wish of my heart in making for our parents a bright and happy home.” And while thus speaking she resumed

her toilsome work with quickened movements that showed the strong impulse stirring within.

The half-tremulous steps and wasted frame of the speaker told of a physical state sadly at variance with the energetic purpose expressed, while a sigh from her more gentle sister, as she wearily and languidly rose to her feet, betokened the weakness *she* also felt.

“Well, dear, hopeful Marion, I will try to think as you do, and perhaps we *may* find another bright home in God’s good time.”

“‘He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He

increaseth strength,' otherwise I could scarcely hope at all ; for, in truth, I did not know how weak I was until my strength was tried by this packing ;" and the pale exhausted looks of the speaker verified her words.

"Yes, dear Nellie, it is all sadly true. We *are* weak and broken in strength, but when I think of our sweet, patient mother I feel nerved for anything in spite of my weakness," replied the indomitable Marion. Thus conversed the two sisters as they proceeded in the work of dismantling the pleasant home now to be theirs no longer, and it would have needed no second glance to

convince any looker-on, that though young in years, they were old in the experience of life.

They had indeed come through one of those "furnaces of affliction which had seemed to be heated one seven times hotter than they were wont to be heated" in the ordinary affairs of human life; while yet patient hope, cheerful courage, and unshaken reliance on the gracious providence of God had survived it all.

But it is time that we had introduced our readers to the antecedents of the two sisters.

Eleanor and Marion Heywood were

the eldest daughters of a faithful minister whose labours had been prematurely cut short by all but fatal illness.

Scarcely had he been brought back from the “gates of death” when the family were stricken down one after another by scarlet fever in its most malignant form—Mr. Heywood himself among the number. One younger child and the mother were alone strangely excepted from the power of the fearful malady, and on these two devolved the whole care and nursing of the fever-stricken household. Neighbours and friends shrank away in fear, and in this somewhat rural district no such thing as an *able* nurse was to be found.

These were not the days of enlightened knowledge as to the mode and means of lessening the danger of infection, and an almost mortal fear possessed the public mind as to the perils of malignant fever; thus every one but the doctor held aloof as in terror. But all through this “night of sorrow” the bravely patient wife and mother kept her lone vigils and nursed her sick ones, strangely upheld by a *strength* far beyond her own; and though the “Angel of Death” hovered long over the devoted dwelling, as though unwilling to depart without *some* victim, all were spared; but the sternest heart might have melted to see the band of

living spectres that crept forth from those sick beds after many weeks of imprisonment ; and to no *golden* future did they come forth.

Mr. Heywood was irrecoverably disabled, and must resign his office to a successor. He had married rather late in life, and consequently his family were still young. The two eldest, already introduced to the reader, were eighteen and sixteen years of age. Then followed two sons—now at a public school—and two younger daughters, the latter not much beyond infancy.

A studious man was Mr. Heywood, given to close and accurate observation,

so much so that this and his forensic powers had often given rise to the remark "that he would have filled a place at the bar even better than the pulpit," but now prematurely old, and enfeebled, he must withdraw into privacy, with poverty for its accompaniment.

From earliest life Mrs. Heywood had been accustomed to abundant means, and with the prospect of ample property in reversion from her parents, she had, perhaps, not fully "counted the cost" in uniting herself to Mr. Heywood. A succession of reverses had stripped her aged parents of the chief

part of their wealth, and they were now subsisting upon the mere remnant of their once ample property. Their sons, *foregoing all secular advantages, had early entered the Church*, and for years past had occupied important positions in a distant mission field, so that from *them* could arise no pecuniary assistance, either for their aged parents or their only sister thus overtaken by reverses.

But although thus nurtured in affluence, *well* had Mrs. Heywood fulfilled her duties of wife and mother. Descended from an ancient and noble family, there was an air of unmistakable refinement which even the humbler sur-

roundings of life could not obliterate. Hers was a gentle spirit such as seemed *ill* fitted to bear the storms of life ; but a firm and steadfast reliance on the God of Providence possessed her soul ; yet now, not without a pang of *inward* conflict could she look on her disabled husband and emaciated children—two of whom had been brought to the lowest stage of prostration by the terrible disease.

Yet *outwardly* her serene cheerfulness never forsook her, and she was ever to her family “the beloved mother whose presence was calm sunshine, thinking of every one, but never of herself.”

Let us take a glimpse of the apartment where Mrs. Heywood is sitting busily at work upon a piece of carpet, over which her slender fingers bend as though unused to such rough handling. The streaming rays of the autumn sun fell upon her early-silvered hair and pale features, upon which rested an expression of touching patience, according well with their refined outline. Everything around bore traces of the discomfort and confusion inseparable from a distant removal. The carpetless floor and empty bookshelves told their own tale ; but the patient mother toiled on, hastening to complete her rough task.

She was interrupted by Eleanor's entrance and exclamation, "You *here*, dearest mother, and doing this hard work, such as was never meant for fingers like yours? No, I cannot bear this; it is not work for my own mother," added the affectionate girl, as a tear glistened in her eye, and she sought to withdraw the offending carpet from her mother's hand. "Let me take and finish it, dearest mother, for Marion is expecting you at the tea-table, and the little ones are mourning your long absence. Ah, here they come, seeking you," she added, as the door was pushed open, and two little chil-

dren of four and six came with tottering steps towards Mrs. Heywood.

Both were lovely children, but, ah, how changed ! The rich dark beauty of the little Nora, for which her nurse had often called her “a miracle of beauty,” had faded into an ashy paleness, while her fairer, golden-haired sister looked almost ethereally transparent. Lovely they still were, though so changed by the fell disease, and as they came wearily towards Mrs. Heywood, she felt all her mother’s heart yearn towards her wasted darlings.

“Nora *so* tired,” said the little one, laying her head on her mother’s knee, while the little Allie sank down on the

floor by her mother in sheer weakness, saying, "And me, too, mamma, *so* tired. Are people ever tired in Heaven?" added the child, while a far-off, dreamy look stole over her face, as though her thoughts had travelled to the "land that is very far off."

"No, my darling, none are ever sick or weary there. They are led gently by 'living waters,' but ask Nellie to tell you the sweet verses about it when bedtime comes;" for the patient mother felt herself almost overcome for the moment by the child's question, and would not that the little ones should see her tears; so rising and leading them away, she descended to tea.

## CHAPTER II.

“Not few nor light are the burdens of life.  
Struggle! Thou art better for the strife,  
And the very energy will hearten thee!”

TUPPER.

A CHEERFUL voice greeted them as they entered the once comfortable dining-room, saying, “Now, mamma dear, do praise my skill in improvising so respectable a tea-table from the remnants of things still unpacked. I really shall expect unlimited commendation.” And not even Mrs. Heywood at that moment could resist a smile at the

proofs of Marion's ingenuity, which of a truth had "*made the best of things*," in the half-empty house; not even forgetting the usual decoration of a few flowers for the centre of the table, which, for want of a vase, were now placed in an empty marmalade jar, skilfully shrouded with cut paper.

But best of all was the gleam of brightness thus thrown over the circle by the lively girl's attempts, who always seemed able to find an antidote for gloom in whatever form it threatened to appear.

"You have indeed prepared us quite a banquet, my child, considering present

circumstances,” replied her mother. “There is nothing like putting inventive power to the test.” Cheerfully they all sat down to tea, though deep in the mother’s heart lay a pang, to see the little Allie turn away languidly from the food, as if she sought only rest. Often had she thought that child looked too ethereal for earth, but never so much so as now. Taking the weary one on her knee, she tried to join cheerfully in the family converse, despite her boding fears.

At this moment, Mr. Heywood entered, bearing an open letter, and addressing his wife, said, “My dear, I have just heard from Mr. Adams, that

we must hasten our departure, for my successor wishes to enter as soon as practicable, and much will be needed to prepare the house for another occupant, after all this illness, so we must try to depart within the next three days."

"So soon, dear father?" exclaimed Eleanor, in a regretful tone.

"Oh, Nellie, all the better," interrupted Marion. "I care not to linger, now this is no longer *home*. I am eager to find our new one, and begin life again."

The parents smiled at this characteristic reply of the impetuous speaker; while Mr. Heywood replied—

“You are right, dear Marion, delay could avail nothing. Let us look hopefully to the future. He who led Abraham into a strange land will not fail to lead us.”

Fervent were the prayers ascending from that family circle as they bowed together at evening worship, and each one felt *assured*, that He who once led Israel of old, would also go before *them*.

It was already decided that their future dwelling-place should be in the immediate neighbourhood where Mrs. Heywood's aged parents were now residing, and among the few friends

still remaining of her early youth. It was hoped sufficient interest would be found to introduce Eleanor to the work for which of all other she seemed admirably fitted. Her earliest longings had been "to teach." Arduous although she knew the work to be, it had a *sacred interest* in her eyes, quite apart from it being a hoped-for means of maintenance.

Eleanor's studious diligence from early years, and great aptitude for acquiring languages, gave promise of no mean ability for the great work of Education, and to this sphere her hopes and expectations were directed. In this

idea Marion fully shared, "content," as she would often say, "to be Eleanor's subordinate," in the plans projected.

Let us look in upon them the last evening, before quitting the home so dear to each one. The hurry of packing was all but over, and the two sisters had resolved to have a last twilight stroll in the garden, when all was done. Eleanor was busily closing all up, in preparation for this, when Marion hastily entered, excited and breathless.

"See! see! Nellie," she exclaimed, waving a bank-note in triumph. "Is not this a token for good ere we depart?"

We have had the ‘darkness.’ Is not this like the first tinge of ‘dawn’? Look what good Miss Evans has just sent for us, and in such a delicate way that even dear mamma could not feel pained. So now, Nellie, we *can* have the dresses we so much need, before going to a fresh place, besides the new mantle for the darling mother, on which, above all, I had set my heart.”

Eleanor looked in silent wonder as Marion’s eager rehearsal proceeded, until brimming tears showed how deeply her heart was touched by the opportune gift, as she replied—

“Yes, dear, hopeful child, *let* us hope

that this *is* the beginning of ‘dawn,’ after the ‘darkness.’”

The donor of the bank-note was no other than the maiden sister of the kind doctor, who all through the illness of the family had, with indefatigable care and professional skill, attended them, often, in addition, sending fruit and flowers from his own garden for the convalescents, and who now, with fatherly interest, rejoiced in having been able to bring his patients through the perilous malady.

A veritable “son of consolation” had good Dr. Evans been to the afflicted household, and his sister, like-minded

with himself, now sought to repeat the kindness by a parting present to the two elder girls, and thus we find Marion's triumphant delight accounted for.

That night the two sisters paced the garden in the twilight, and amid all the regrets of their farewell to the familiar spot, hope and gratitude were the uppermost feelings, as Eleanor repeated in low tones, "My God shall supply all your need," &c.—"Your Heavenly Father *knoweth* that ye have need of such things."

And full of hope the two sought their rest.

We pass over the intervening space of disquiet and discomfort, attendant upon the removal, and the choice of a habitation, and look in upon the family in their modest dwelling, situated in a quiet suburban street of the great provincial town of an Eastern County, where the two girls, with eager haste and consummate skill, for those so young, were arranging all things; resolved to spare their mother every possible fatigue and thought in the matter, as well as to economise to the utmost.

Thus the brave young hearts were battling on, while Mrs. Heywood, chiefly

engaged with her husband and still weakly children, was only called in now and then to admire progress, or give an opinion upon some projected arrangement.

“I assure you, I find in my eye for drawing, no mean assistance in the arrangement of these draperies,” called Marion cheerily to her sister, as, mounted on high steps, she decorated the windows of the small drawing-room with their appropriate garniture.

“There is nothing like necessity for bringing knowledge into *practical* use. And I see you profit by the same thing, sister mine,” she continued, as, half

This done, no time was lost in seeking to inaugurate the scholastic project ; by which the fortunes of the family were to be maintained, and a quiet resting-place ensured for the latter days of the beloved parents. Although only in her seventeenth year, Marion's height and dignified bearing gave her the advantage of fully two years beyond her age, while the self-possessed gravity of her more quiet sister spoke of a stability of character that could scarcely fail to prepossess in favour of their project. Both, however, had more to learn of the sterner experiences of life, ere success should crown their efforts.

Seeking to introduce the undertaking to the few friends of Mrs. Heywood's early youth, who were still resident in the town of B—, the two girls went forth to make some calls, and from this, their first attempt, we find them returning rather discomfited, Marion's cheeks glowing with something like indignation at the reception they had met with.

“All *summer* friends, dear mamma; nothing more,” she exclaimed with almost passionate emotion, in recalling the particulars of their visits. “They could be complacent enough in the days of your prosperity, but *now* decline to acknowledge the old friend-

ship since your children are seeking to aid themselves and you by honourable effort—in a most honourable calling.” And on the lip of the pained girl there was a curl of something like disdain, that reminded Mrs. Heywood of the proud chieftain from whom she took her maiden name.

Marion was fond of referring to this “grand old ancestor,” as she usually styled him, and in the curl of the lip her mother read but too truly the thoughts of her child at that moment, contrasting all-painfully the noble lineage from which she could claim descent, and the humiliations of present circumstances.

“Well, dear child,” replied Mrs. Heywood, “this is no *new* experience of life, if it be as you say; besides which, the number of years it is since I left my home may well account for some measure of forgetfulness in those who once knew me and your grand-parents intimately.”

Yet as she spoke, remembrances of the days of her prosperity, in which friends abounded, came up before her, and notwithstanding the palliative remarks by which she sought to lessen Marion’s pained feeling, she *inwardly* recognised a measure of truth in the verdict as to “summer friends.”

“But patience, dear child,” she continued, “and keep up courage. We must *stoop* to conquer, as the old proverb says. You have tried the most unpromising ground to-day, and will meet with a more cordial reception, I doubt not, in the calls yet to be made.”

## CHAPTER III.

“Ce n'est pas la victoire—c'est le combat, qui fait le bonheur des nobles cœurs.”

MONTALEMBERT.

AND so it proved. Oh blessed hearts that rescue our humanity from the imputation of universal selfishness, so often attributed to it, and allow one still to believe that *there is* something beyond mere mercenary feeling left in this world of ours!

It was a saving clause to these two young adventurers in the battle of life,

when the tide turned, and kindly sympathy and encouragement took the place of cold indifference ; for, notwithstanding all Marion's bravery of feeling and purpose, she suffered more keenly than her sister in the rebuffs to be met with in the outer world (as all sanguine natures do), and a little more of the hard experiences of life would have almost upset her belief in all "friendship " as a true unselfish thing.

But this was not to be, and the old lady on whom they next called was as fine a specimen of true kindness of heart as could well be found in the world.

“I am glad that your views of human nature are somewhat raised by this afternoon’s experience,” remarked Eleanor, who was always willing to think the best of her fellows, as the two returned from a similar expedition, a few days subsequent to the calls first made—Marion radiant with delight at the success in prospect, while Eleanor, deeply grateful for the auspicious turn of affairs, was inly rendering thanks to the “Giver of all good.”

“Yes, indeed,” replied Marion, “that dear old Mrs. Beaumont is the embodiment of all that I can imagine a Christian and a lady *ought* to be.

No backwardness in remembering our darling mother, or in holding out the right hand of friendship to us her children ; although somewhat in the position of ‘ needy people.’ ”

“ No, indeed,” rejoined Eleanor, “and I ought to correct my remarks as to your having a ‘ better opinion of *human nature*,’ for truly it is only when ennobled and renewed by grace that we find this *really* admirable.”

How truly Mrs. Heywood rejoiced with her children in this more cheering aspect of things need not be told.

A week or two more, found Eleanor with plans matured, and through the

kind interest of this dear old friend of her mother's, with pupils secured for the commencement of her work.

No queen regnant ever took her royal seat with more entire satisfaction, than did Eleanor Heywood when entering her schoolroom to preside over the instruction of her five pupils, the nucleus of future success. It is not too much to say that she *knew* and *felt* her powers as communicating knowledge, and they were not over-rated. So great was her success in interesting and stimulating her pupils in the pursuit of knowledge, that the *bruit* of her reputation soon went forth; numbers increased, and Eleanor

quickly found her strength pretty well taxed by the amount of work in hand.

Marion, though “only a subordinate,” proved herself to be no mean helper in the enterprise, and already both were beginning to look forward to the first happy Christmas they were to have in their new home, when Montfort and Herbert would return from school, and a joyful vacation was to succeed to the close and arduous labours of this first Term.

We have hitherto said nothing of the two youths. Never were brothers better beloved than they, and it was

Marion's especial pride to dwell on their superiority, and to predict "great things" for their future—a future which for the elder was not far distant, since at Christmas his term of study would close.

"Montfort will be a great engineer," Marion was wont to say ; and to this oft-expressed opinion there was not a single dissentient voice, for the boy's predilections and pursuits, from early years, had given strong proofs of genius in this direction.

Gentle to his sisters and mother, but otherwise close and taciturn, he seemed always to have some project in hand, with numberless mechanical experi-

ments for testing the same, and not a single vacation had passed for years, in which he was not immured the greater part of his time, in some spare room, pursuing his experiments. A strange conglomerate the place presented of chemical and mechanical apparatus (for *both* were favourite pursuits), which said room Herbert was accustomed to designate as “Montfort’s *den*” and if ever the latter showed anything of an irascible nature it was when some ruthless hand had been at work, and with a touch of boyish mischief had displaced some of the things in progress—a deed not unjustly attributable to Herbert,

whose more joyous nature loved the society of his sisters, when at home, and often grudged Montfort the hours thus spent in his "den."

A glad thing it was when they could tempt him forth, to join them in some rustic ramble, although, as Herbert remarked, "he was sure to spend half the time groping in holes and corners." That Herbert's remark embodied a veritable fact, none could deny; for the faculties of research and invention were ever at work so strongly within the mind of the pondering youth, that even amid the lively home circle he still seemed "to live a life within himself."

“What would come of it all still remained to be proved,” Herbert would dryly remark, when vexed that he could not draw his brother from his favourite pursuits, to join himself in athletic sports.

“Destined to be a great luminary to the world, Montfort, no doubt, at which I shall be glad to light my tiny spark”—“Am quite easy as to *my own* prospects, since I shall shine in the reflection of *your* splendour,” were specimens of the playful raileries sometimes employed by Herbert upon his silent brother ; but all to no purpose.

“We must let the fellow alone, for

he is incorrigible," he would finally remark to Marion, who longed as much as Herbert, to draw Montfort from his reveries, sometimes.

The joyous nature of Herbert was scarcely more *unlike* that of his brother, than was their personal appearance.

Herbert's bounding step, bright complexion, rich brown hair and clear blue eyes, were unmistakably in keeping with his temperament ; while an almost chivalric tenderness towards his mother and sisters made him the very darling of their hearts. To *him* even the little ones confided their infantile troubles, and strange stories were told of the feats

he enacted for their special amusement !  
No day for *them* so sad as that which saw Herbert return to school. Montfort, on the contrary, slow and deliberate in his movements and speech, plain in features, with raven black hair, and rather sallow complexion, was altogether unattractive, save when the lustrous black eyes, kindling into animation on some rare occasions, spoke of the intellect that lay hidden beneath that plain exterior. A lack of attention to personal neatness not unfrequently added to other defects, when deep in some meditated scheme ; upon which said fault Marion would descant with some-

thing of vexation, but Eleanor would lovingly extenuate by saying—

“Ah, but he will make a *grand man* after all.”

A prediction which never failed to soften Marion's ire, though she nevertheless wished heartily that she could bring Montfort up to a higher standard in personal matters.

“If I could only make him like Herbert in this particular, I should be well content,” she was wont to say. “He is a dear fellow, but I do hate slovenliness.”

“Exactly so, Marion, but you must make some allowance for the pre-occupation and eccentricities of genius.”

“What, if some day you should have to be proud of the ‘dear sloven’?” was Montfort’s laughing remark, as he overheard Marion’s strictures one day when entering the room unobserved.

Herbert himself was no idler in his studies ; but without being anything of a genius, bade fair to have an excellent standing among his fellows ; while his character for good conduct was irreproachable.

His social nature rendered him a universal favourite, while none could more effectually frown down an evil-doer, and maintain *the right*, in the face of all opposition, than he ; so that in

the world of school-life, he was looked upon as a sort of champion for the right in all matters of dispute.

Truly proud were the girls of their two brothers, and in looking forward to the delights of Christmas, all present toils were forgotten.

## CHAPTER IV.

“For sloth yieldeth not happiness. The bliss of a spirit is action.”

TUPPER.

Thus time sped on, until one morning within a month of the vacation, Mr. Heywood entered for breakfast, saying—

“I have pleasant news for you all this morning; Montfort is elected for the ‘Term of honour’—a distinction conferring a whole year of gratuitous education, in addition to the usual course.”

Exclamations of delight arose from both the sisters, while Mr. Heywood, addressing his wife, continued—

“Nothing could have been more opportune, my dear, for in truth I had begun to feel anxious as to Montfort’s future, so nearly at hand, and, with our present means, able to do so little for him.”

“The distinction is, indeed, valuable in every sense,” replied Mrs. Heywood; “for although my brothers would willingly aid us by their influence and introductions abroad, if nothing here opened for Montfort, yet I would rather my boy should remain in England, if pos-

sible, and by another year we may be able to find some opening suitable."

This happy delay of an unexpected difficulty as to Montfort's *immediate* prospects was hailed by all with unmixed satisfaction, and regarded as an earnest of "good things yet to come" on behalf of their eldest boy.

That all predicted for him a successful and distinguished future (whatever difficulties might lie between) none could deny, though the grave parents knew better what the struggle for this would probably be than did the younger part of the community. Now all were happy and thankful—the health of the

whole family had improved, and even the little drooping Alice seemed to be out-growing her natural fragility, while she and the tiny Nora, under Eleanor's wise care, were advancing with their little studies quite as rapidly as was desirable.

To the tried family it was now an interval of comparative repose, and although the parents had their moments of solicitude for the future of their sons, this they could commit to the God of Providence who had so graciously provided for the present.

The busy days sped on, and the sisters knew little of leisure or pause in

their work ; but when quietly conversing, as they retired at night, Eleanor would remark—

“ Well, dear Marion, the present *does* seem almost the fulfilment of your bright predictions of a year ago, which I *then* thought all but Utopian and visionary.”

“ Yes, indeed,” replied Marion, “ it *does* seem so ; but did I not often tell you that I *meant* to work hard for it, and never to rest until I saw something like comfort around the darling mother again.” Then, as if recalling herself, and that her words savoured too much of “ Mine *own* hand hath gotten me this,”

she added reverently, "And how we *have* been helped! Oh! marvellously beyond our expectations; for in truth, Nellie, after that *first* discomfiture, I had not much hope left, although I would not own it. Had it not been for the mother's wise words, I should have become quite antagonistic to mankind—and God too, I fear," she added, in a lower tone; "for my spirit burned as I thought of the supercilious pride of those ordinary people, only great by their *wealth*, and so void of nice kind feeling, and then looked at the gentle, high-born mother as trampled upon by them in her adversity."

“ Ah, dear child, you forget that this is the ‘way of the world,’ generally speaking, and also that it is upon the ‘*most precious stones*’ the ‘chiseling’ is bestowed. It is *hereafter* that *they* will shine in the temple above. Then will be ‘read out’ all the reasons, for it may be even a *life-long* discipline of sorrow and adversity. So, dear child, you must learn not to faint, if discouragement should again await us.”

“ Well, yes, dear Nellie, your words are most true, and remind me of that favourite quotation of mine from Montalembert, ‘*Ce n’est pas la victoire, c’est le combat qui fait le bonheur des nobles cœurs.*’ ”

“Yes, dear child, that is high sentiment, and *sounds* well; but we must have a firmer anchorage than *this* for our faith, if we would outride the storms of life.” And Eleanor’s words sank deep into her sister’s heart.

Settled firmly herself on the true basis of Christian faith and hope, she longed that her bright, beloved Marion should reach the same settled foundation, nor rest short of reaching that “Rock” upon which, though the floods might descend and the rain beat, the dwelling should yet stand firm, unhurt by the swelling floods.

These sisterly communings in the still night hours, were among the most

precious moments of their lives, to be remembered in after years, especially by the one sister as a "precious gift of heaven," a *seed-time* of blessing to bear rich fruit in time to come.

The wise nurturing of the Christian parents was already proving a radius of blessing in the lovely life of their eldest daughter, and shedding a benign influence over the whole family.

It was within a month of Christmas, and all was glad expectation of the boys' return from school. Eleanor's first term of experience in educational work had closed most satisfactorily, with prospect of successful continuance.

Only one shadow had fallen on the

bright probabilities of the future, in hearing that “Montfort had not been well, and that Dr. M— had fears there was some tendency to ‘disease of the heart,’ but the indisposition had passed away, seemingly, and he was at work again, and should be all right after a little rest at home.”

Christmas Eve found them all assembled—Marion absolutely jubilant ; Mrs. Heywood almost *tearfully* glad as she welcomed the two travellers, and noted Montfort’s pallid looks ; Eleanor sedately joyful ; while Herbert, in exuberant spirits, caught up Allie, as he entered, saying—

“Why, my little fairy, this can’t be

you ; I expected to see only a shadow left, after that terrible fever."

The ethereal-looking child had the flush of excitement on her cheeks instead of the lily paleness usual to her.

Then seizing the little Nora—whose rich bright beauty had in its health returned—Herbert half smothered the lovely child with kisses, exclaiming with a brother's fond admiration—

"You little queen ! If you were not my sister, I would run off with you for my own little wife."

"But I couldn't go," answered the child gravely, "and leave mamma and Eleanor."

“No fear,” said Herbert, gently putting her down. “No, you shall be my little queen here at home.”

Calmly happy Mr. Heywood looked that evening as the whole family assembled for early evening prayers, that the “little ones might be present too, that first gathering.” The voices of the whole group swelled harmoniously in the hymn—that fine old version of Luther’s, “Christ, my Rock, my sure defence, Jesus my Redeemer liveth,” &c., an especial favourite of Eleanor’s.

Looking at her mother as they sang, she read in the gentle face calm trust and restful peace, and she gave thanks.

As being the eldest child, and confidant of her mother, Eleanor knew the “tossings of spirit” that sometimes visited her heart, and the daughter’s simple trust and calm, unquestioning faith had often been as a “bulwark of defence” to that tried and weary spirit.

Brightly the days passed with the young group; for an unusually open season, with fine mild weather, gave opportunity for many a pleasant ramble, and *this* time armed with Dr. M—’s verdict, “that Montfort *must let study alone, and have plenty of walks,*” Herbert did not fail to exact the fulfilment of the *latter* part of the doctor’s

injunction, although to his “den” Montfort would still retreat at every opportunity.

“I shall not fail to come and haul you forth at the appointed time, my dear old fellow,” Herbert would say, as they left the breakfast table, “so you may as well yield amicably, otherwise I shall bring a battering ram and besiege you in your ‘den.’” And Herbert was as good as his word.

Less study and daily rambles brought back some tinge of healthful glow to the pallid cheeks of the student boy ; so that one day, on returning from a longer walk than usual, on entering the

house Herbert gaily called out to Marion as he pointed to his brother—

“Bring the fellow a glass and let him look at himself, for I declare he is growing quite handsome.”

## CHAPTER V.

“ There was a time, when meadow, grove, and stream,  
The earth, and every common sight,  
To me did seem apparelled in celestial light ;  
The glory and the freshness of a dream.”

WORDSWORTH.

“ LET us go to Roslyn Woods to-day, and have a ramble about the old castle,” was Marion’s proposition, as they assembled for breakfast one fine morning in the third week of the vacation, “ it is just the day for a walking excursion, and we cannot expect such weather to last much longer.”

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“Yes! *Let us go,*” was Herbert’s eager rejoinder, as he glanced at Montfort, and saw no signs of response on *his* part to the project thus put to the vote.

“Now, no objective case *this* time, if you please, my dear fellow,” he continued, as he foresaw by Montfort’s face something like a negative reply at hand.

“Here’s the third week of our vacation come, and you have been nowhere yet, except a paltry walk now and then. It’s no use—I shall try to get possession of that ‘den’ whole and sole, if you can’t be tempted from it for a

single day. Mamma, what do *you* say in the matter?"

Thus appealed to, Mrs. Heywood took Herbert's view of the case, and warmly sanctioned the project (though not able to join the party herself), as did also Eleanor, and thus it was decided.

"I shall marshal my company by ten o'clock, and no later," said Herbert, inly rejoiced that for once he had won the day, and got Montfort, as he said, "under marching orders."

A joyous party of the four set forth at the time appointed, Marion and Herbert in the highest spirits. It was

one of those marvellously fine winter days, mild and spring-like, that sometimes in our climate is the immediate forerunner of "winter in earnest."

The delicious freshness of the air, tempered by brighter sunshine than January can often boast, made it delightful walking, and the three miles of distance seemed nothing to the young pedestrians, as they set forth, furnished with a light luncheon to be taken in the great hall of the CASTLE—the only habitable portion remaining of the once noble pile.

"Could anything have been more delightful?" said Marion, who, was feel-

ing herself to be no mean diplomatist, thus cleverly to have succeeded in getting Montfort out for so long. "No, indeed, sister mine, nothing could be more delightful. It is a perfect 'gift of a day' for mid-winter, such as we shall not have again, I dare say."

"And all thanks are yours for heading the scheme," replied Herbert, as with one bound he cleared the first stile leading to the woods, and then stood cavalierly to help his sisters over, while Montfort, as usual, brought up the rear.

"Now, my dear old fellow, no moping nor 'groping in corners' either, to-day," he laughingly exclaimed, as Montfort

made a turn towards the first shady nook, trellised with ivy branches, in search of the few winter mosses that might be found.

“No! I shall claim absolute possession of you to-day, on behalf of myself and these fair sisters,” said Herbert, as putting his arm within that of his brothers, he recalled the truant to the right path; and for once Montfort was fairly circumvented in his favourite plans, and had to march straight forward until they reached “camping-ground,” as Herbert merrily said.

They reached the Castle, and, after a general survey of the ruins, spread

out their lunch in the old banqueting-hall, the grim old care-taker of the place full of obsequious attention in this rare advent of a party of winter visitors.

There were not a few *historic* traditions connected with the old Castle, and these were enlarged upon *ad libitum* by the old keeper. Here, Fair Rosamond was said to have dwelt for some time, safely hidden from her mortal enemy, and the door by which she afterwards escaped from the tower, still bearing her name, was duly shown.

The greater part of this was still standing, with its half-ruinous staircase, and to reach the top, was the adventure

planned by Herbert and Marion, as they gaily chatted over their light meal, the former assuring Montfort that, while they were absent, he should be permitted "to follow his bent as he listed."

"Not the nicest thing in the world to attempt," was Eleanor's mild remonstrance, as to the project of climbing the tower, for which feat she had no capability herself, having no "head for climbing," as she said. Herbert's assurance, however, that he would be a careful cicerone, quieted Eleanor's fears, and, taking a book, she withdrew to a sheltered nook, within view of the

tower, while Montfort went his way into the adjoining woods.

“We shall hoist our flag when we reach the top, so look out, Eleanor,” was Herbert’s playful remark, as he and Marion went off together full of their project.

Carefully stepping, they climbed the broken stairs without much difficulty, until within three or four steps of the top, where the stones appeared so loose, and the mortar so crumbling, that Herbert came to a halt.

“Stop a moment, and I’ll try these last steps before you attempt to come up,” he said rather hurriedly to Marion,

who was following close behind. "I can't bear for us to be defeated when we are so near the top; but we must be careful, nevertheless."

Balancing himself carefully, and holding by the tufts of coarse grass that grew out from between the broken masonry, he reached the top exultant, and then drew Marion up.

The height was great, and the outspread view of the surrounding country magnificent. "We are well repaid," said both, in one voice, as they cautiously turned to survey the prospect on all sides.

Herbert's signal soon fluttered to

the breeze, and was answered by Eleanor's salutation in return, who had watched rather anxiously for their appearance on the top, and now satisfied as to this being safely accomplished, she took up her book while awaiting their descent.

Just at this moment Herbert espied a rather rare specimen of lichen growing on the edge of the wall about half the distance round the circle of the tower. The massive thickness of the walls seemed to promise a fair footing in width, while Herbert, intent upon securing the rare specimen, waited not to calculate all probabilities.

“It will be capital if we can bring down from this eyrie height something to rival Montfort’s specimens from the woods, but don’t you come, Marion.”

“Where you go, I follow,” was her very decided answer.

“Then stoop down, and you will be less likely to turn giddy,” said Herbert, as he went on hands and knees himself, while Marion, crouching low, followed behind. They reached the coveted specimen, which Herbert quickly secured, and were traversing the remaining half of their perilous circle, when the wall proved to be much less secure—in fact, large pieces of mortar crumbled now

and then beneath their feet. It was a terrible test of nerve, in which, happily, neither of the two were wanting, or it *must* then have given way, for just at this moment, some strangers entering the ruins below, and seeing the perilous position of the young people, most incautiously (on the impulse of the moment) called aloud to warn them of their danger.

The start thus given had nearly completed the peril! Marion felt her brain reel, and almost lost her balance, but Herbert's stifled exclamation, "Hold on, Marion!" while revealing his consciousness of the danger, at the same

time rallied her failing powers. They paused for a moment on the giddy height to regain steadiness of nerve to proceed ; while an inward cry for help went up from both. Breathlessly they crept forward, and as by miracle completed the perilous circuit of the tower unhurt, while Eleanor (who, roused from her book by the outcry of the strangers) had watched the latter half of the terrible exploit in agonised suspense, stood transfixed and trembling, her limbs refusing to carry her to the spot.

“ We are here all safe, thank God,” was Herbert’s exclamation, as he hurried to Eleanor, leaving Marion (who *now*

trembled too) to rest at the foot of the staircase.

“Yes! thank God indeed,” was all that Eleanor could then say, as pale and trembling, Herbert led her towards the place where Marion was resting.

It was a peril and a deliverance never to be forgotten!

In detailing the events of the day that evening to the home circle, each one shuddered at the recollections of that “fearful peregrination,” as Marion called it, and Mrs. Heywood’s remark was—

“Well, my children, I think the Prince of the Power of the Air must

have had something to do with tempting you into *such* peril;" in which remark even Montfort concurred.

But the pleasant days were passing all too swiftly, and the last Sabbath morning had come. All were ready early for service, and at Allie's wish placed themselves in order according to age, "Like we used to do when we were *very little*," said the gentle child (now scarcely seven years old) "and say hymns until mamma is ready."

And so they did—and very touching were the remembrances of that Sabbath morning, ere the anniversary of the day came round! The morrow saw the two

boys return to school; Montfort, with many injunctions, "to care for his health, and not study too hard."

Eleanor resumed her work, and the tide of life flowed back into its usual channel of close and earnest occupation. The pleasant interchange of letters alone diversified the busy lives of all.

"Montfort is a splendid mathematician," wrote Herbert, "and is carrying all before him; while I, your humble servant, am fain to make the best of my speed, and will not disgrace the family name if I can help it."

Full half the term had expired, when anxiety was again awakened by Herbert's

report—"Montfort has been on 'sick leave' the last week; bad symptoms have threatened again, but he thinks little of them. At any rate, Dr. M— has interdicted all study for the time, at which the fellow is sorely refractory."

Again came an improved report of Montfort's health, and all fears were allayed, except, indeed, the *instinct* of foreshadowing that sometimes visited the mother's heart; but even she, too, was re-assured, when Montfort wrote cheerfully himself, "that he was back at study again, and enjoyed it more than ever. I mean to make the most of my privilege, dearest mother, for time grows short."

The prophetic truth of those words was veiled at the moment, hereafter to recur with deepest meaning !

As time wore on, the parents often conferred on the future of their eldest son, and were preparing, by every possible sacrifice, to advance his interests.

“ He will be all the better for having to rise chiefly by his own merit,” Mr. Heywood would remark, when Mrs. Heywood was disposed to deplore on her son’s account the fallen fortunes of her house.

“ Do not grieve over this, my dear,” he would say; “ the path to success is open before the boy, and with perseverance for his motto, and God for his guide,

he need not fear." I am now in communication with Sir Ralph S—, in whose large mining interest there is every probability of an opening ere long, and in this undertaking our boy would have fair scope for at least one department of his genius."

"If I *have* a solicitude, it is for his health," added Mr. Heywood, for the *first* time giving expression to an anxiety he had not owned before. "Yet that is now so much improved again, that we may justly be very hopeful, if not quite at rest."

"My comfort," replied Mrs. Heywood, "is in knowing that Montfort

has the foundation of right within him, and that under that seemingly cold and taciturn nature, there lies the 'hidden life.' ”

Seldom was it that the parents had exchanged thought so freely on a subject near their hearts, and both were comforted.

Eleanor, too, could have said more on the same subject, for somehow she had the key to *all* hearts on these matters, and even with her close, silent brother she had communed of “things to come,” in their highest sense.

“He will use our family motto in its *truest* signification,” she once remarked

to Marion (for whom all allusion to “crests” and “armorial bearings” had an especial charm). “‘*Deus est spes*,’ is no unmeaning watchword for a Christian hero, and I hope our Montfort will be both.”

## CHAPTER VI.

“Yet sighed again that breeze-like voice of grief,  
Thou art gone hence!—Alas that aught so brief  
So loved should be!”

HEMANS.

It was not many evenings after this, that the sisters held quiet converse, while retiring to rest. Marion's bright spirits seemed for once to be under a cloud, and at length she said—

“Nellie, you need not think me superstitious, but, indeed, I have the strangest, darkest foreshadowing of sorrow over me to-night, that you can imagine. I have battled with it all the

day, and tried to rouse myself out of it, by recalling all the wonderful mercies we have seen, since this time last year, when you know, all *was very, very* dark, but even this has been ineffectual. I cannot shake off the load. A leaden weight seems to crush me down. If I could treat the matter *lightly*, I should say that a great fall in the barometer was at hand," added the lively girl, with a touch of her old playfulness, "for you so often speak of my *mercurial temperament*."

Eleanor did not corroborate her sister's state of feeling, whether she felt it or no; but quietly replied—

“ Well, dear Marion, if you cannot throw off this strange depression, and the fear of some sorrow at hand, you must apply the same remedy that David of old did, and say, ‘ What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee.’ ”

The sisters knelt in prayer together, and Marion lay down somewhat comforted ; yet that the painful impression on her mind was not *removed*, her restless tossings and half-incoherent words, through several hours of the night, plainly showed. Eleanor, more quietly wakeful, marked it all, and her heart rather misgave her.

It was now but six weeks to the close

of the Term, and the boys would again be with them, Montfort bringing his well-earned honours, as she doubted not—and what joy for them all! She tried to turn her former saddened thoughts into thanksgivings, and at length slept in peace.

Herbert's well-known handwriting greeted them in a letter on the breakfast-table, but Marion's face, flushing with eager haste as she tore it open, suddenly paled, as she glanced it over, saying—

“Ill again.”

Then recalling herself, that her mother might not be startled, she added—

“At least, *poorly*, and away from study again.”

“Poor Montfort!” Eleanor exclaimed. “I fear he will fret sadly under these frequent interruptions to his work, and these so near the close of the Term, too.”

“No,” replied Marion, “Herbert remarks that this time Montfort takes it very patiently, and seems almost *glad* to rest.”

Nothing more was needed to confirm Eleanor’s worst fears that this time Montfort was indeed ill. If that indomitable spirit would yield, and give in the contest, when so nearly reaching

the goal, she thought to herself, he must be *really* ill.

Mrs. Heywood had taken the letter from Marion, to read for herself. It was evidently written *guardedly*, and the medical opinion softened down, but Herbert admitted that this was not very favourable. Quiet was the chief thing the doctor enforced, and they hoped that after the rest of another week, Montfort would be himself again.

Nothing could be less calculated to excite *alarm* to a cursory observer, than the statement thus given; yet after a few sad weeks had passed, each one admitted that *that* letter had

been to them, in secret, as a warning knell.

But once more they heard of improvement in Montfort's state. He was "about" again, and Herbert so cheerily detailed the pleasant chats they had together in recreation hours, as "Montfort" was not allowed to walk much just now, being still on sick leave, though evidently much better, that fears on his behalf once more slumbered, and pleasant anticipations of the fast approaching vacation took their place.

"*Then* he shall be well nursed," said Marion, "until we see him *really* strong

again, and all study shall be out of the question."

"Most admirable legislator," said Eleanor, smiling at her sister's zeal, and the small probability of Montfort ever submitting to such restrictions as to study, "but you shall have all the aid of *my* powerful influence to enforce your regulations, depend upon it; only let us have Montfort safely here once more."

Eleanor was herself feeling rather fagged with her work, though her *interest* in the same never flagged.

Kind Mrs. Beaumont, seeing the rather worn looks of her young friend,

had insisted that she should spend the short interval from Saturday to Monday with her.

“We must not have you grow old before the time,” she had remarked to Eleanor, “so I shall expect you without fail this very week.”

The kind interest of this dear old friend had not ended with her first efforts and influence in obtaining Eleanor pupils, but ever since, with an almost motherly interest, she had watched over the two young people, advising and encouraging them in their plans, and always jealously guarding matters relating to health.

“You cannot keep the bow *always* bent,” she would say to Eleanor, on finding, from Marion’s occasional hints, that the former was sometimes given to studying at nights, when she ought to have been asleep—an admonition, for which Mrs. Heywood always truly thanked the good lady.

This was the *only* thing in which Eleanor ever infringed the law of her mother’s word, and if ever the latter remonstrated, she still found it difficult to resist Eleanor’s pleading entreaty,—for “just a few minutes” or “only one half-hour, which you know, dearest mother, *can* only be redeemed from the

long night," and so the infraction *was* sometimes overlooked, though *Marion* never failed to remonstrate.

Saturday morning had arrived, and Eleanor was to be with her old friend by noon. The early post brought a letter for Mr. Heywood, and Eleanor took it to her father in his study, handling it without a thought of misgiving; for not being in Herbert's handwriting, she supposed it to be only some business letter.

Long her father delayed, until Mrs. Heywood desired Eleanor to remind him of the waiting breakfast. No shadow fell on her spirit as she rose to do so,

but her heart stood still as she opened the study door, and beheld her father sitting as if transfixed; his face buried in his hands, as he bent over the table, on which lay the open letter. Eleanor was at his side in a moment, as a flash of the truth dawned upon her.

“Father! dear father!” was all she could say; while, with quivering lips, she forbore to question him. It needed not—the sad truth was already before her. Half raising his head, Mr Heywood pointed to the open letter, while, with a suppressed groan, he uttered—

“Your poor mother!”

Yes! the sad truth must be made

known, and it seemed the next moment to recur to him that HE it was who should break it to the sorrowing circle, and soften as much as might be the overwhelming blow. Rousing himself from the half-stupor in which Eleanor found him, he gathered up the letter, and taking her arm approached the door. Bending over her father, as she stood beside him on first entering, she had glanced over the page and realised the terrible truth ; but the noble girl stifled the outcry of grief that rose to her lips at the moment, and thinking only of her mother and Marion, strove to be calm; yet her quivering, blanched lips, as they

entered the room, and her father's grief-stricken countenance, were sure harbingers of sorrow to the startled group ; no *words* were needed to announce this.

With an agonised cry, Marion rose to her feet as she exclaimed,

“Oh, Father! Eleanor! What *is* it?”  
Yet her heart told her all! Then glancing at her mother she rushed to her side, and with a burst of passionate grief, buried her face on her mother's shoulder. Eleanor drew near to support her, while the two little ones crept to their father in strange apprehension. Mrs. Heywood did not speak or give any sign of passionate grief, for the blow had

stunned her, and the marble paleness of her countenance and tearless sorrow, almost terrified Eleanor. All were, for the moment, so stunned, that the details of the sad event seemed unheeded.

Eleanor tried to speak, but the words died on her lips. A few moments, and the silent and stifled sobs were interrupted by Mr. Heywood, who took up the letter, and struggling for calmness, read it to the weeping group; for Eleanor's tears now flowed freely, while Marion, choked with sobs, knelt at her mother's side.

It was from the Governor of the col-

lege, and written in deepest sympathy with the afflicted parents.

Brief were the details of the last sad scene, so suddenly to close.

Montfort had continued to recover apparently ; and, indeed, thought himself so nearly well, as to plead for the withdrawal of the doctor's restrictions, assuring him "that he felt quite able for work again."

But medical discernment had perceived too clearly the threatened danger, hastily to allow of this.

"Incipient enlargement of the heart was no disease to be trifled with," as the doctor had privately remarked to the

governor, with respect to his studious patient ; when the latter, feeling much for the youth's grievous disappointment, was almost inclined to join in Montfort's pleadings.

“ Yes, it is hard for him to lose any portion of his well-earned honours, but better this, than life,” was the doctor's decisive reply. So Montfort had submitted, though with a protest against any farther “ enforced idleness.”

## CHAPTER VII.

“Take them, O Death! and bear away  
Whatever thou canst call thine own!  
Thine image stamped upon this clay  
Doth give thee that—but that alone!”

LONGFELLOW.

HE had risen as usual, and, according to his own report of himself, “quite well, and only longing for work,” when a sudden seizure of faintness came on, deadly pangs of pain in the region of the heart succeeded, and the sufferer was at once prostrate.

Herbert was at his side in a moment ;

every appliance that medical skill could devise was promptly used, but with scarcely even a temporary relief : a few short hours and the mortal strife was over !

Few and brief were the words spoken between the brothers, though Herbert never left his side. Montfort at first seemed scarcely to realise his position, overpowered by the suddenness of the seizure ; but there was no *alarm* when the fact became manifest that “his hour was come.” His faint farewells to the loved ones at home were given at intervals, when the paroxysms of pain for a moment abated. Then sinking

still faster, he feebly uttered, "Let me rest, I want to lie down in heaven;" and, still grasping Herbert's hand, he peacefully departed.

With still fixed face the mother listened, until her son's last expression of calm trust fell on her ear; then the flood-gates were *indeed* opened, and she wept freely, to Eleanor's deep relief, for she had trembled at her mother's silent sorrow.

Mr. Heywood proceeded, and as the Governor's testimony to his late pupil was read, every heart was bowed with overwhelming grief.

"Your lamented son," he wrote, "has

left a blameless character, and a noble example of studious diligence to all his late associates ; while the Christian principle actuating his life was manifest to all. Yours must be the sorrow, but yours also will be the consolation to reflect on this, when the first keen anguish has subsided. That his career would have been a distinguished one, there could be no doubt ; the presages of this were unmistakable, but the calm trust of his latest moments will be your *greatest* solace in this hour of deep trial." And it *was* so. Into that open grave all must look, where so much of hope and future gladness was now

for ever buried; and at that moment they could not realise it all, but yet amid the bitter grief they *could* give thanks for “the victory won,” and that the silent, taciturn youth had left his latest testimony of Christian hope, making good his mother’s words about the “hidden life.”

“There has been ‘no strife at parting, no sore amaze,’ dearest mother,” said Eleanor, amid her fast-flowing tears. “Let us give thanks for that.”

And amid the weeping group, Mr. Heywood knelt, and with stifled grief, and in broken accents, “gave thanks” for the beloved one “thus safely brought

through the river of death to the glorious rest beyond."

Marion's grief was terrible to see; it seemed almost to rend body and spirit with a strength of anguish that only such natures can suffer. As they all rose, she exclaimed, "But, at least, we shall have the dear one brought to rest beside us here," looking imploringly at her father, and as though this thought brought some faint alleviation to her nature's sore smart. "Oh, if *only* he can be brought here," she continued, in her agony of grief, "we shall at least look upon him once more."

The nearly three hundred miles of

distance that lay between B— and the southern locality where the brothers were at school, presented an almost insuperable difficulty, as the rail communication was by no means complete, and, added to this, there was the heavy expense attendant upon such an arrangement.

“No, it could not be ; Montfort must be ‘laid to rest in a land of strangers.’ Oh, if *only* this might not be,” piteously pleaded Marion ; “if we *could* but *have* his grave to tend and visit sometimes,” said the stricken girl, “I could bear the sorrow ; but *never* to look on his face again, or be able to see his

grave, is *too* terrible." Yet so it must be. Mr. Heywood alone could go to be present at the interment, which, under the circumstances, it was needful to hasten.

We may not dwell on all the sad days that followed—Eleanor nobly striving to moderate her own grief and sustain her afflicted mother, whose physical nature almost sank beneath the blow—all the sad questionings that *would* arise (even though grace enabled her to bow submissively) as to "Why, after losing so much of earthly good, this her firstborn son must be taken too," he who promised to be so *much* to

them all? These sad questionings she must lay where only they *could* be laid—on the Great Burden-Bearer, He who bore our griefs “and carried our sorrows.”

It was no ordinary strain on poor Eleanor's mind and body to resume her work, after the one sad week of mourning, and energetically pursue those plans which had hitherto so deeply interested her. Life seemed changed, and a pall overshadowing everything. But Eleanor was no *nominal* Christian, and in the effort to bear her many burdens, she *was helped*.

The little ones clung to her more

than ever; they, too, had grieved bitterly, particularly Allie, when the sad truth dawned upon them, that Montfort could "never come back any more."

Eleanor sought to turn their thoughts to the "glad meeting above," and the "bright glory in which Montfort had gone to dwell."

Marion's grief had worn her sadly, and it broke out afresh at every new recollection of their sorrow, so desolating to all their hopes. And "poor, poor Herbert," she would sometimes say, "he has to bear it all alone."

Happily the stimulus of study was

the best remedy for the lonely brother's grief, and the thought of "trying to be something of what Montfort would have been to his family," nerved him to fresh efforts.

The few weeks of the Term expired, and again the family were re-united; but the shadow of the past was resting heavily upon them all. Subdued and quiet converse (often *tearful*, too, as they drew from Herbert some fresh reminiscence of the closing scene) took the place of the joyful sallies and mirthful glee, in which both Marion and Herbert loved to indulge. Their daily walks for health's sake were duly

taken, and in these Mrs. Heywood was now sometimes induced to join—more for her children's sake than her own—but the little ones no longer ran with glee, or shouted in well-feigned terror as they saw Herbert pounce out upon them, for a pretended brigand, from some by-place at the road side—which of old he never failed to do.

It was beautiful now to see how tenderly he thought of his mother and sisters in their grief—veiling from them the deep sad blank left in his *own* life by Montfort's removal, and seeking only to solace them. All the love of Marion's passionate nature seemed

now to concentrate upon Herbert, who had ever been her chosen associate in gayer moments. There was but one year's difference in age between the two brothers, and now, saddened by grief, Herbert seemed at once to step into the position of *elder brother*, and to take Montfort's place in their fond expectations. One more year, and *he*, too, would have left college to be ready to begin life in some calling or *profession*, which Marion hoped "would be the medical one;" and pictures, framed in fresh hopes, would now and then steal into her mind, amid the gloom of the present.

Eleanor, too, shared in these hopes, and tried to bring sunlight into the bereaved home once more. Her own work prospered, and the mental vigour so early discernible in her mind seemed to have full play in her present occupation.

Marion's strength had drooped from the time of her brother's death, and, though feebly holding up to her share of work, it was evident that she was failing. Little Allie, too, though eagerly pursuing the studies of a child of her age—far *too* eagerly, her mother often thought, for she was not strong—grief had touched the child's tender

frame. Her loveliness of mind and person seemed to increase—with that inexpressible touch of the “*spirituelle*” in look and aspect, that made even a stranger remark the child. Her chiselled features were, as Marion used often to say, “a transcript of her grandmother’s”—a most noble old lady in appearance, with fine Grecian outline of countenance. Fair as a lily among her darker brothers and sisters, so great was the contrast that it was not unfrequently asked, “Can this be one of your family, too?”

Allie had ever been Eleanor’s especial charge from the day that the little Nora

first claimed her mother's care, and still the child clung to her with tender love, and was never happier than when with Eleanor alone, and listening to some of her sweet gentle teachings. The impress of Heaven's seal seemed upon the child from her very infancy, and now she longed especially to talk of Montfort in his "heavenly dwelling," and the oft-read description in the Revelation, of the "City that hath foundations," showed how often her thoughts reverted thither. All this and more was often noted by Eleanor, and not without a secret fear.

## CHAPTER VIII.

“Here is no home—here is but wilderness !  
Forth, pilgrim, forth ! Look up on high !  
And thank the God of all !”                      CHAUCER.

MARION'S strength gave way at last, though she had battled bravely against “giving up,” but now became so ill that soon gravest fears were awakened, for inflammation of the brain seemed inevitable. The long-sustained tension and bitter grief had done their work upon a frame never too strong, and now she sank prostrate. It was anxious watching

for one whole week, and the strain upon Eleanor's strength terrible, as she taught the whole day, and watched by night, whenever she could prevail on her mother to take a few hours' rest. Little Allie would steal into Marion's room in the day-time, and watch for hours, entreating her mother "to rest a while, and I can do my lessons as I watch," the child would say. It seemed as if her gentle movements and soft touch had power to soothe Marion's half-delirious state, while her childish skill in bathing the heated brow and burning hands of the invalid was wonderful. Mrs. Heywood, pressed by

many cares, gladly owned the dear child's help, and let her often come.

The crisis was at length past, and Marion began to recover, while her little nurse, assiduous as ever, was quite elated with joy to see her patient daily improving, though by slow degrees. Then came a kind request from good Miss Evans that Marion should "come and regain strength with her."

• "How truly kind," said the feeble girl, as she showed the letter to Eleanor, "but how *can* I go, and leave you to toil on alone?"

"Do not once think of that, dearest

Marion; if I can but see you strong again, never mind the rest."

"Oh, how thankful I am that we have not had to alarm poor Herbert by news of your illness!"

With what trepidation they had delayed doing so, Eleanor did not say.

"Poor Herbert! It would, *indeed*, have been sad for him to hear of more sorrow," said Marion, "yet, indeed, I sometimes felt as if going down, down,—oh, *very* near to that last, long rest that Montfort is taking."

"But you are spared, my darling sister," said Eleanor—then wishing to turn the subject, for she saw the bosom

heaving with emotion at the mention of Montfort's name, she added, "And how did you feel, dear Marion, as you seemed to be going 'down—down.'"

With a moment's hesitation, but with a gleaming look, she replied, "I felt that 'underneath were the arms.'"

Marion was not often demonstrative on these subjects, and it caused a thrill of joy in Eleanor's heart to hear her sister's words. Deeply moved, she bent over her with a kiss, saying, "Now, my darling rest, or I shall have you ill again."

A week or two more, and Marion

was able to profit by Miss Evans' kind proposal of "going to recruit with her." Deep and varied were the emotions with which she re-visited the familiar neighbourhood, saw the old home, and, when strong enough, wandered in the old haunts they had so often frequented when Montfort was of the party. To these it seemed as if her feet irresistibly led her. The wood, where he had caught the adder, and the Chevin, up which they used to go late on summer evenings to see the *ignes fatui* dance. Yes! All was there the same, but he! and Marion had to check the rebellious feeling that rose with her tears, as the

now buried hopes came up in review before her. In an *earthly* sense, Montfort could be nothing more to them all, only a loved memory of the past—an earthly shrine, at which affection must weep out her tears—but oh, how vainly! Yet even his memory was a precious legacy, for which she could still thank God, amid all the smart of sorrow left.

Thinking thus, she rested for a few moments on a mass of rock, by which they had often paused in former days. Here it was they had waited long one evening, wondering what *could* have become of Montfort, who had suddenly

been missing from the party, and then re-appeared, bringing some glow-worms, to the exceeding delight of all. The remembrance was too much, and, bowing her head, Marion wept bitterly.

A gentle hand was laid upon hers. She had not noticed the footstep, and a voice saying, "Ah, Marion, my child, have I found you thus?" checked for the moment the fast flowing tears.

Miss Evans had remembered that Marion had talked of going to the Chevin that afternoon, and finishing her own visits to some sick poor, had come towards the Chevin, expecting she should meet with Marion.

It needed not to question her as to the cause of her grief. Miss Evans guessed all, and, sitting down by the sobbing girl, she soothed her tenderly, saying, "I, *too*, have had my idols, dear Marion; but they were *not* spared to me, and *now* I can see the love that so ordered it."

Marion held her breath. *Could* it be that any one should live to think it *well* that a beloved one was taken away? She had only thought *bare submission* possible, and looked up wonderingly at Miss Evans, who only said, "Sometime, dear Marion, I will tell you all, but now let us hasten home, or the dew will be

falling, and my credit with the doctor will be forfeited."

That evening a long, quiet talk succeeded to this brief outlet of feeling, and Marion thought she saw how it might be *possible* to think as Miss Evans did ; though, as yet, she could hardly feel that it *was best* for her brother to have been taken.

A joyful day it was for the home circle, when Marion returned to them, and looking her blooming self once more. She thought Eleanor looking " miserably worn," as she said, and was inclined to reproach herself for her long absence ; but Eleanor would not hear a

word of it, saying, in reply to Marion's questions as to her ill looks, "Only a headache now and then, and I don't sleep very well; but I shall soon be better, now I have got you home."

"And how pale the darling Allie looks," said Marion, continuing her observations, and her eyes following the child as she left the room. "How I wish she could have a change too, for I am sure she needs it."

"Mamma is not happy about her," observed Eleanor, "and I am not satisfied either; the dear child so often has frights in her sleep, yet in the day she is so bright and busy, and her greatest

sorrow is to be deprived of any part of her lessons."

"I own I do sometimes think her almost too good and too clever to be spared long to us," added Eleanor, with a sigh quite *unlike* her trustful self.

"Oh, say not so, dear Nellie. I cannot bear to think of any more sorrow," Marion replied, with almost a shudder.

The very next day came a summons for Mrs. Heywood to her aged mother, who had been seized with paralysis suddenly

We have hitherto said little of the

grand-parents, who had lived in great privacy since their loss of fortune.

They were a noble old couple in appearance. Marion often declared "that her grandfather might be the veritable old Lord L—, from his fine martial figure and bearing." The children *loved* to visit them, and hear stories of their old ancestor—Nora especially, who had a tinge of Marion's nature on these points.

The dear old lady was a true Christian, and had nobly borne the great reverses of her latter years, after having willingly dedicated her two sons to the service of the Church. Keen.

had been the sorrows of later years, but "the rest" was now not far distant. She did not linger long, but within three days departed to be with the Saviour she had so long loved and trusted.

"And she has seen Montfort," said Allie, with almost wondering delight, as she talked with Eleanor the evening of her grandmother's decease. "Is it not wonderful," she added, "why, it seems to make Montfort quite near to us again." And her blue eyes, as she spoke, seemed to look away into the far distance of Heaven's space, and her spirit, to forget, for the moment, all

thoughts of the "river of death" that lay between.

"Yes, darling, it *is* wonderful," said Eleanor, touched by the child's eager expressions, yet not wishing to turn her mind to the "Jordan" that lay before her *own* view; "and dear grandmamma has seen the Saviour, which is better still. Would you not like to go, too, Nellie," added the child? and her face took that *far-off* expression Eleanor had sometimes seen before.

"Yes, Allie, when the right time comes, but you and I must be glad to live, and try to do some work for the

Saviour we love, and to comfort  
mamma all we can."

"Oh, yes, so we must," said the child,  
as if recalling her thoughts once more  
to earth.

## CHAPTER IX.

“There is no Death! what seems so is transition.

    This life of mortal breath

Is but the suburb of the life Elysian,

    Whose portals we call death.”      LONGFELLOW.

THAT conversation, and many similar ones were laid up as “precious memories” in Eleanor’s heart, to be recalled with deepest thanksgiving, though often with gushing tears, when the summer sun was shining brightly above her darling’s grave, and the dear child had gone to dwell in that “temple,” whose “Builder and Maker is God.”

The beautiful young life seemed to grow brighter and brighter, with such a rare intuition of mental power and eagerness in the pursuit of knowledge, that its acquisition was the very joy of her daily existence.

“There is no ‘*setting* of tasks’ for Allie,” Eleanor would often remark, “for they are self-imposed before I can mark them out, and my only fear is lest the child should go too fast ; yet how to restrain her eagerness I cannot well see, without grieving her heart.”

“Let me say some nice pieces now, Nellie, please,” was often her request when they were walking alone, and

surprising was the choice made of the poetry committed to memory, which Eleanor most safely left to the child herself. "I don't think we can *ever* afford time to be idle," she would sagely remark, as a sort of apology for troubling Eleanor with her "pieces," while they walked!

"But *are* we *idle*, Allie, when each of our two feet are going on fast as they can?" was the playful rejoinder Eleanor sometimes made, when wishing to withdraw the busy child from her too busy thoughts, though always glad to hear the "pieces" repeated with such beautiful emphasis and expression, showing that

every word was understood in its fullest meaning.

That fine ode, not very generally known, "The Farewell of the Soul to the Body," and many of Mrs. Hemans' finest poems, were among Allie's chief favourites, and the last week's exercise that she wrote was a transposition of Addison's beautiful version of the twenty-third Psalm, done, as Eleanor then said, "with wonderful ability," and by her own choice. The dear child appeared truly to realise the force of the injunction, "Occupy till I come." The shock of grief in her brother's death had certainly told on her, and the

anxious parents had tried a brief change to country air, which had seemed to recruit her not a little ; still, it seemed from that time as if the “King’s Messenger” had spoken his “*secret message*” in her ear, and when the hot weather came, her strength drooped rapidly. The busy works were laid down, never to be resumed, as it proved!

Mrs. Heywood’s attention had necessarily been absorbed greatly by the sudden illness and death of her aged mother, as well as the arrangements consequent upon the removal of her now lonely father, so as to be nearer herself.

Smarting under this recent bereavement, her heart failed her the more, as she saw Allie begin to droop so fast, and, taking the alarm at once, medical help was called in. "Symptoms of water in the head" were pronounced to be present. Oh, how speedily developed!

The "far-off" look in those lovely eyes was changed to an anxious look of suffering, so characteristic of the disease. Her moaning sleep, and troubled dreams, soon to be followed by frequent wanderings of mind! Every means of relief failing, all seemed to speak of the fiat as gone

forth for the transplantation of this lovely flower to the Eden above.

Mrs. Heywood devoted herself wholly to the darling sufferer, and Mr. Heywood (all studious man as he was) for the time forgot all but the child thus fading from their sight. Her suffering was often agonising to the mother's heart to witness. The moan of pain and restlessness, such prominent symptoms in this fearful malady, were now almost incessant.

“Oh, rest my head, mamma, dear ; one little rest !” was the frequent cry, until it became less and less articulate, in the momentary slumbers that stole

over her, though still the moan of pain continued.

Reclining on her little couch in the quiet-shaded drawing-room, whither she was daily taken for fresher air, she seemed one day to slumber quietly, and Mrs. Heywood, a moment, left the room. On re-entering, the calm gaze of the little one met hers, as she feebly said, "He has been, mamma, and he says he will soon come for me."

A few moments more, and the child had relapsed into her half-unconscious state, from that time scarcely to be aroused from it. With agonised hearts they felt they must resign their darling,

though every means (and painful ones, too, that wrung the mother's heart) were ineffectually tried.

A week hence, and the little Allie was slumbering in her shroud, which Eleanor and Marion had *themselves* prepared.

"None else shall dress our darling for the tomb," they both said.

The little form looked pure as sculptured marble, as they wreathed around it loveliest flowers, brought by Eleanor's pupils. And so, the sweet child was laid to rest ! while still her lovely presence seemed to linger in the house, and one and all to wait for her return.

The blank to the whole circle was terrible. The lovely child, with her winning ways and beautiful thoughtfulness for all around, had been as sunlight to the whole household, and now this had departed! But there was a sanctity in this sorrow, for it seemed as if Heaven's gates had opened in their very midst, and received the fair child, who still, according to her own words, seemed "very near."

Marion's grief was less passionate this time, for, as she remarked to Eleanor, "Heaven seems much nearer now Allie is there;" but Eleanor mourned deeply for "her own darling,"

as she was accustomed to call her. To the parents, it was indeed a bitter cup. The “two little ones” had been so *much* to Mr. Heywood since his severance from the ministerial office, and in the hours not given to study, they were always at his side. Now the little Nora was his only solace.

Mrs. Heywood felt her loss continually, and the plaintive request of the suffering child, so oft-repeated towards the close of the scene, “Take me in your arms, mamma, and let me rest my head,” was ever sounding in her ears. It had been sad news, too, for poor Herbert, so soon to return finally to his

home—now stripped of another treasure—yet it was well for Eleanor that the vacation was not far distant, for her “headaches” grew frequent.

Kind Mrs. Beaumont had sympathised deeply with the family in this their second great sorrow, and seeing how greatly change was needed for all, she sought out a rural cottage, three miles distant from town, and took it for a month, begging Mrs. Heywood to be the occupant. It was a tiny place, with its fragrant strip of garden, and not able to accommodate more than half the family at once, but all in turn had the benefit of the change, and many

were the pleasant walks to and fro from town as the party changed, Mrs Beaumont, herself, sometimes driving over “to see, as she said, that no one *studied too much.*”

Herbert was spending his vacation with a school-fellow, an arrangement which, for his sake, all rejoiced in. “It is better that he should not see the blank now,” they all said, “and *soon* we shall have him with us for a long time.” The next was to be Herbert’s *last* term at college, for although he had an excellent standing as to general acquirements, and was no mean classic, still there was no especial mark of genius as

in Montfort's case, awarding to him "the term of honour," and the family scarcely regretted this.

"Let me *keep* my boy, if he *be* less learned," Mr. Heywood sometimes remarked, as in thought he reverted to Montfort's early removal.

Refreshed by the timely change Mrs. Beaumont's kindness had afforded, the family re-assembled at home.

Eleanor and Marion, busy with their pupils, who at least kept up their numbers, and thus materially added to the family income.

Marion was becoming a very able "subordinate," as she still called her-

self, though sometimes slyly remarking that perhaps she might not *always* be this, at which remark the colour would mount to Eleanor's cheek, revealing a meaning in the allusion at which we have not yet hinted, viz., that Eleanor was pledged to give herself to another, and it *might* be at no very distant period she would be called to do this, since, like Mrs. Heywood's own brothers, Eleanor's affianced was destined also to enter the mission field. That Marion felt this rather as "a sentence hanging over her head," than a thing to be anticipated, we will not attempt to deny, yet

*sometimes* she would allude playfully to the matter.

The family life flowed on once more as before, and the gentle mother disguised her sorrow for the lost ones, for the sake of those still remaining to her, and Eleanor, who loved to watch her mother's face in a quiet hour, thought sometimes that she read there a growing acquiescence, as if the "inward eye" could see "a far better" inscribed on the removal of her lovely flower.

Little Nora was growing in stature and in beauty, such as made Herbert call her "his little queen." She was a

meditative child, more in disposition like Montfort than any of the rest, and like him, loving to find "a corner" in which to pursue her own thoughts. Behind her father's easy chair, hidden in the window curtains, or sometimes even under the couch, the child would ensconce herself, buried in her book. All laughed at the strange whims of the "little hermit," but they let her alone, for her daily lessons were always well prepared.

The fear of *over-study* was more a reality than ever, since Allie's removal from them, yet Eleanor sometimes replied, in answer to her mother's queries

on this point, "If the child's mind *will* work and ponder, it seems quite as safe to let it have some *given* subject to dwell upon."

Time sped on, and the evening before Herbert's return had arrived; the sisters, with something like cheerfulness, were anticipating the glad arrival; but still the chastening of this sorrow rested upon all, and Marion, addressing her sister, said, "Nellie, you know how long since we thought that 'dawn' had come, but it hardly seems so now. And *has* it not come for two of our loved ones, dearest?"

"Yea, more, Eternal day," added

Eleanor, although her voice trembled as she spoke.

And Marion did not venture more in reply.

## CHAPTER X.

“The sunshine is a glorious birth ;  
But yet I know, where'er I go,  
That there hath passed away,  
A glory from the earth.”

WORDSWORTH.

THE glad arrival came, and the family were almost taken by surprise in seeing the fine manly youth that greeted them.

Herbert was not very tall, but the twelve months had wrought its usual changes in the person of a growing youth, whose well-knit frame and pro-

portions were comely to behold. The glowing face, rich clustering hair, and loving eyes, were all the same, with a look that seemed to intimate that he now felt himself qualified to be the protector of his sisters. Tenderly, and almost silently, he embraced his mother and them, then catching sight of Nora, with his old playfulness, he said,

“Yes, Nora, you *are* my little queen, and now I shall be your knight-errant, and fight all your battles, for now I am big and strong enough, as you see.”

The walks and rambles were soon resumed, all winter though it was, and they tried to entice Mrs. Heywood to

join them, or Herbert walked out alone with his father, conferring together on the future.

It was not long they had to wait for the desired opening. Herbert's blameless character at college, and excellent attainments, had won for him the esteem of the Principal, and through his recommendation Mr. Heywood soon received an offer from a medical man of some position to receive Herbert as a pupil to his profession. "Having no family himself, premium was not a matter of consequence, in the case of a youth of good, sound principle and attainments."

From the head of the college the Doctor had also heard the particulars of Mr. Heywood's premature disablement, and subsequent family afflictions, which had induced him to make the liberal proposition stated. Here, then, was an opening beyond their utmost hopes or expectations, for Herbert, who, so "joyfully sad" in having so soon to leave the dear circle, had to busy himself in immediate preparations.

Though entering so hopefully and auspiciously upon life, the sisters knew well that this was only the *beginning* of the matter, and that heavy expenses would of necessity follow in the choice

of this profession, and with hearty self-denial prepared to sacrifice to the utmost their own small means for the necessary outlay.

“*Could* anything have been more suited to our hopes and wishes for the dear fellow?” said Marion, as they talked together the evening of the day the indentures had been completed. “I think it will be just the very stimulus we were needing, after all this sorrow, to rouse us up again to work and cheerfulness.” And they *did* work, and their efforts were so aided and prospered that the parents seldom felt the pressure of the added expenses.

It was within twenty miles of the family home that Herbert was to be located, so that they should be able to meet sometimes.

“And when we visit the S—’s, we shall be close at hand, and often see Herbert,” Marion continued, still dwelling on the same subject.

Light and sunshine were at length dawning on the sorrowful household, and in the happy arrangement for Herbert’s future, cheerfulness and hope seemed to spring up once more.

“I really think I *prefer* our life of earnest work, even with its interludes of anxious care, to one of *mere quiescent*

*dependence* in receiving all from our parents, *if that could be*," observed Marion, in one of the sisterly talks, in which, somehow, *she* was generally the chief speaker.

"Well, yes, dear Marion, I don't know but I am quite of your opinion. At any rate, this is allotted to us, so we do well to be content, and thankful for the wonderful Providence that has helped us so far, and opened up Herbert's way."

They had soon delightful letters from the dear fellow. "His position was everything that could be desired." "Almost *too* indulgent a lot," he

wrote, "when I think of my hard-working sisters at home; but some day I hope to return it all fourfold. I love my profession, and am resolved to excel in it."

Marion's face flushed with joy and pride on reading such letters. What efforts could she not make for such a brother?

His first visit home, though for a few hours only, was a jubilee to all.

"What a young aristocrat the boy has become," said Marion, the first moment she could speak to Eleanor alone. It was a fact, that the fine, manly youth was developing rapidly under

such favourable auspices. Increasingly did he become a favourite in his master's family.

“He is such a perfect gentleman,” was the pleasing remark the family heard of, as being made by the Doctor's lady, herself of aristocratic family.

Time seemed now to fly very swiftly, vacations came and went. (There were no brothers to spend them at home now!) but the girls visited their friends, the S.'s, and, according to Marion's expectation, they *did* meet often.

Herbert had speedily become a fine horseman, as by instinct, and often rode

over for a brief call, while his sisters were staying with their friends, and a sisterly pride was often awakened when they saw him vault so gracefully into the saddle, and rein in the beautiful "Araby," the pet steed of the Doctor's lady, which she always liked Herbert to exercise, when not using it herself. He was, in fact, as Eleanor said, only in danger of being *spoiled* by the Doctor and his lady, who called him "her chevalier," and would often have him drive her, in preference to the groom, when she went out alone.

Many were the sisterly admonitions given by Eleanor in these brief meet-

ings, and “the dear fellow always took them in such good part,” as Eleanor said.

Years passed on, and there were anxious times now and then for the two sisters, when their slender finances could hardly bear the strain of Herbert’s expenses ; and their physical strength was heavily taxed, too.

“Ah, well he will soon repay it all, and far more,” Marion would cheerily say, and her expectations seemed truly *well* founded, for Herbert was advancing rapidly in his profession, and was already greatly valued by Dr. P—, who now inducted him to farther re-

sponsibilities in the charge of some of his rural practice.

“Heywood is so thoroughly reliable,” he would remark to a friend; “he bids fair to supplant me in the favour of my poor patients.”

Among these he was a great favourite, from his surgical skill and ready sympathy. All this promised *well* for years to come, and bright prospects, sketched by Marion’s imagination, often grew out of it.

One year only remained of the term for which Herbert was indentured.

He had, in fact, as to position, grown

out of his pupilage, and was already filling the office of assistant.

Christmas was once more approaching, and Mr. Heywood, who had been in rather failing health during the autumn, had arranged to spend it among his old friends in the north, it was, therefore, welcome tidings when the girls received news that Herbert was to have a week's furlough at home, if nothing special arose to prevent it.

"It will fill the blank so delightfully for dear mamma and us all," they both observed, "and we shall not dwell so much on the past, with Herbert with us."

The weather, which had been up to this time of almost summer mildness, now suddenly changed, and was succeeded by unusually severe frost.

“It is well that father got safely away before all this came,” remarked Eleanor, “for I believe we shall have an *old-fashioned* Christmas, with plenty of snow, and that our enjoyment of Herbert will chiefly be in cosy chats by the fire-side.”

“Well, we shall hardly regret the rambles this time,” replied Marion, “for mamma will see all the more of Herbert if we are kept indoors.”

“Dear fellow, he *will* feel important

now papa is away—quite the ‘head of the house.’”

In cheerful employments and preparations the sisters busied themselves, for Herbert was to be with them the next day, and remain over the next Sabbath.

“I shall be glad of a *quiet* opportunity to speak with him,” observed Eleanor, “for I sometimes fear lest he should be drawn aside in his busy life, or lose his earnestness in spiritual things, all lovely though he is in our eyes as to *outward* life.”

“Dear, watchful Nellie,” replied her sister, “yes, I shall be glad, too, for you

to have one of 'your talks' with Herbert, although I do think he is a real christian."

Thus happily conversed the sisters, all unconscious of the impending blow which even then had fallen upon them, and the beloved object of their solicitude, though they knew it not; destroying for ever those visions of earthly happiness of which he was the centre. Alas for the young hearts thus sorely to be smitten!

The morning came, and with it joyful excitement, as perceptible in Marion's every movement.

"We shall be sure to have a line to

say what time Herbert will be here," was her remark, as they all assembled for breakfast, and the hour of post drew near—but no letter *came* !

" Ah, well, he means to take us by surprise," was Marion's interpretation of the matter.

Family worship was only just over, when Eleanor was called from the room, and was astonished and startled to see Dr. P.'s groom bearing a letter, which he hesitatingly presented to her.

" Could it be from Herbert?—but, then, why not by post? Had he already arrived in B—, and was detained elsewhere by some business matter; or was

it to be a disappointment after all as to his coming?" All these were among the queries instantly presented to her mind.

Evidently he was the bearer of some message besides the letter, and hesitated, in reply to Eleanor's hasty enquiries as to whether her brother had come or not.

Poor Eleanor! She was not willing at that moment to admit even the suspicion of any bad news, or her eye must at once have told her the truth from the man's hesitating manner and ill-concealed agitation.

He signed for her to read the letter, which she held half-absently in her

hand, while rapid queries were passing through her mind.

Hastily she scanned the contents, which told—ah, what! “that Herbert was not killed—but hurt—hurt seriously, by a fall from his horse, and requested that some of the family should come over at once.”

“My mother, oh, my mother! How *will* she bear this?” was Eleanor’s half-smothered exclamation, as she paused in reading the letter, and as though hoping to elicit the truth more quickly from the man himself, turned to question him.

Yes, her worst apprehensions were

all true—"not killed on the spot"—but how soon all might be over, none could tell, for the sufferer had been quite unconscious from the moment of the accident.

The facts were briefly these—

"Herbert had taken out the beautiful Araby, the evening before, for a short airing, and, galloping her round the wide, park-field, on the crispened grass, the high-mettled creature had started at something, and, losing her balance, as her feet touched an icy pool, had fallen, flinging Herbert violently on the roots of a large tree, all iron-bound with the keen frost. Happily the groom had, in

the distance, seen him fall, or life might have been extinct ere assistance had been rendered.”

“It is sad news to bring you, Miss,” said the man, as he brushed away a tear with his coat sleeve, “but Dr. P—thought I had better *come*, and bring some one back with me as quickly as possible.”

## CHAPTER XI.

“Thou tak’st our summer hence—the song—the tone  
The music of our being—all in one  
Depart with thee!”

HEMANS.

A MOMENT’S pause for thought and prayer inly for help. No! she must not delay a moment. Her mother and Marion must know *all*, even the worst! Her father, too, away!

The revulsion of feeling, as the truth was made known to them, is not to be described.

It was crushed hope and agony com-

pressed into the same moment, as, deathly pale, Mrs. Heywood and Marion listened to, or rather caught at, the hastily given facts—but, it was a moment for *action*, and every moment was precious.

“Let *me* go, dearest mother,” said Marion, with eager energy. “Let *me* go. It will kill you to travel in such weather, and then, if Herbert becomes conscious, you can follow soon, and be with him too.”

Marion could not think very clearly at the moment, “but anything to save her mother the shock, and first, worst bitterness, of seeing Herbert lying in-

jured and unconscious," was the uppermost feeling in her mind.

Poor girl! She could not see that distance from the sad scene could be no palliative. At any rate, the man could take but one back with him in the light curricula, which, for speed, he had brought.

Eleanor would not contend the point, but felt *she* must stay, if her mother did. How greatly she would need *her* help, to bear up under this sorrow, was plain.

So Marion was not opposed—they felt it better she should go—and, hastily aiding the brief preparations, she was quickly on her way.

That day of fearful suspense ! Eleanor often afterwards wondered how it was lived through. Loving thoughts for her mother, and prayers for the sufferer, were the only palliatives to those weary hours of waiting. They felt nothing more could be done then.

The next post brought no *better* news, only it was not worse, so this gave a faint hope. Marion seemed nerved for the sad post she had undertaken, and her words of hope, and almost cheerful submission, as she sought to cheer her mother and sister, were wonderful—

“ Dr. P. could give no further opin-

ions until some sign of consciousness returned. This was only the third day since the accident, and unconsciousness might continue much longer, and yet hope not be extinct. So try to hope, mother, dearest, and God will not forsake us in this extremity."

How true it is that we may live to look back on scenes of intensified sorrow, and marvel that we did not die under them! Marion often thought so in after years.

When she first entered the darkened chamber it was to see the darling of her soul lying in blank unconsciousness, no sign of *apparent* suffering, except the

contracted brow, and rigid muscles. The shock of concussion to the brain had been so terrible, that motive power and sentient feeling were alike suspended.

With sternly, anxious countenance, Dr. P. was bending over his patient, whom he only left for the most necessitous cases. Every possible means that skill could devise to awaken, if might be, the dormant spark of life, and lift the terrible weight from the brain, were used without intermission; for the rest he could only wait. Very doubtful it appeared whether consciousness would ever be aroused again.

But there was no sign of passionate

grief now on Marion's part. All this was silenced into the one thought of *what could be done*. In the *first* sad sorrow, when Montfort was taken, there was nothing left to be *done*, but terrible endurance of the pang. All was over beside! and under this she sank. *Now*, all the energies of her strongly impassioned nature were concentrated upon the silent waiting and tending, until the critical moment was reached. Whether the sufferer would then awake to consciousness, or quietly sink, was the question that none could answer.

Daily, Marion wrote wonderful words

of cheering and hope to her mother and sister, and watched on. Stronger remedies were applied to lift, if it might be, the fearful oppression from the brain; and, under these, at length, on the sixth day, the patient gave some sign of feeling, by a faint moan, as strong counter-irritants were applied, and with it came a gleam of hope to the anxious watchers.

“We shall bring him round yet, Miss,” was the involuntary exclamation of the faithful man-servant, who had watched nightly in attendance on the sufferer. Herbert’s affable manners, and natural skill in horsemanship, had

won all the man's heart. No response from Dr. P., however, seconded this hopeful exclamation on the man's part. He knew, too well, the chances of the case.

Another twenty-four hours and *sentient* consciousness was restored—but, alas! with this came wild deliriums also, when the patient was not too exhausted to move, or utter the incoherent ravings.

Poor Marion! She nerved herself to bear this too, and bravely did she hold up to Dr. P.'s admiration, in the skilful tact displayed in the management of the poor patient. What would

she not do if only her mother might be spared the sad scene?

Every day she *hoped* some favourable turn in the case would occur, and enable her to write and say to her mother "come;" but, as things were, she knew and felt that in Herbert's *present* condition it would be as injurious to him for any seeming stranger to be near, as it would be heartrending to her mother to witness the wild excitement of that poor shattered brain. Marion had chosen her part, and she felt she must keep to it, without a thought of flinching.

Superhuman strength was given to

hold up night after night, and snatching an hour or two of rest when her patient slumbered the most. She still assured Dr. P. "that she could hold up quite well." But he knew that such strength could not last for ever, and at last desired that some one else should come and share the exciting fatigues with her. So Mrs. Heywood came; but it was too much for her gentle nature to bear, when the poor sufferer did not know her, and when (as is so often the case where reason is for the time dethroned) he seemed only to dislike the "stranger women who teased him with medicine"—from

Marion's hand he took it without an objection. So Dr. P. advised that the patient's fancies should not be crossed, or any fresh excitement caused, and, sadly, the sorrowful mother withdrew, while Eleanor took her place. Not even she possessed the same power that Marion had, in soothing the wild excitement that set in every evening, from the same hour at which the accident had occurred.

Twin souls, when in life and health, there was, happily, still a talisman in Marion's touch and voice that gave *her* power when even the doctor could scarcely manage his patient, or control

the fevered strength of some moments, when he would leap from his bed and stand by the fire, or try to make his escape from the room, under the impression that he was "being kept in prison." Such were moments that tested Marion's nerve to the utmost; but, with wonderful tact and presence of mind, she would succeed in calming her patient, and, when the momentary excitement had passed, the fictitious strength would as suddenly fail; to be quickly succeeded by prostrations so deathly that life seemed ebbing out at once. All this time even Marion was not recognised as his sister—she was

only “the good nurse who knew how to make the pillows comfortable.”

Now and then it seemed as if reason was struggling for the ascendant, when the calm of exhaustion had succeeded for an hour or two—

“Why am I here?” Marion once faintly heard, as she bent over her brother, uncertain whether sleep, or faintness, was the cause of the quietude. She hoped to hear her name, but it came not. There was no recognition of loved voices and faces, and, on this account Mr. Heywood had not come, for, “fresh risk of excitement could only arise, and so less chance of his

patient's recovery," Dr. P. had said, and the chances were now small indeed.

Why should we prolong the details of this sorrowful scene? If the sufferer lived, there was little hope that mind and intellect could ever be fully restored. Yet, how they clung to his life!

"We *must* leave it, dearest Marion. God will do what is wisest and best for our precious one," Eleanor had said, as she and Marion watched the failing strength, and increasing stupor; symptoms that spoke little of hope to their sorrowing hearts—still trying to "hope against hope."

“ Oh, Nellie, but I must ask that at least some faint kindling of consciousness, and word of farewell, may be granted us,” said Marion, amid her stifled sobs—the first time she had broken down. “ Oh, if we might but see our Herbert himself once more, I could almost bear the rest !”—falteringly the last words were uttered.

How well it is that we may not, cannot choose, and who would dare to strike the balance between life and death under such circumstances if it *were* given them to choose? Neither *had* the decision to be made by human verdict in this case. He—in whose

hands are the issues of life and death—  
“did what was best.”

The *gleam* of consciousness *was* granted, and a brief kindling of the loving glance ere the lamp of life went out. Herbert seemed *for the moment* to recognise the loved faces bending over him, and then, with one short struggle, the spirit departed.

“He has been spared the pang of farewell,” said Eleanor, as she sought to comfort her almost inconsolable sister. “Now I can think only of the darling mother. We must try to live for her sake.”

Little could be said in the presence

of such sorrow! The grave would claim its own, and hide from sight even this beloved object of so many hopes and prayers.

There were days to follow in which the crushed hearts seemed incapable of receiving *any* consolation.

“Let us read the burial service together, and try to think of the glorious resurrection,” Eleanor said to her sister one day when both had “wept until there was no more power to weep.”

“Let us *try* to look above, and away from the grave, and in thought hear the triumphant song of the ‘redeemed

ones.’” And, Mrs. Heywood entering just then, they read it together.

But stricken hearts have still to *live on and bear* until the “Great Healer” Himself binds up their wounds. The grave had opened this *third* time, and now had closed upon all that had remained for fond hope and human love to build upon.

Those earthly expectations were now only as “a dream, a vision of the night,” past and gone for ever !

“Our chief wealth is now in heaven,” Eleanor would say, when they *ventured* to speak on the subject, but to Marion especially it was so completely the *grave*

*of buried hopes* that seldom did they allude to this great sorrow.

Tenderly caring for their parents, who were indeed bowed and shaken by this fresh storm of grief, the sisters otherwise “went softly,” as Holy Writ describes it. There could be no *hurried* healing of a wound so deep, and both felt it was *well* that they had work and occupation *necessarily* claiming attention.

Mrs. Heywood, too, tried to busy herself among her poor, and, accompanied by Nora, often gladdened the hearts of the “needy ones” by their timely visits. It had ever been *Allie's* chief joy to accompany her mother on

these occasions, and her own little self-denials of pocket money, in order to increase the store to be dispensed, were still a precious and touching memory to all.

“We shall best bear our own sorrows by trying to live for others,” the sweet mother would say when returning almost too weary from her rounds, and Marion, with loving remonstrance, was inclined to chide. Still it was a *sore* chastening for them all, and Mr. Heywood seemed stricken deeply, as he recalled, like one of old, that he had now “*no son* to keep his name in remembrance.”

## CHAPTER XII.

“And canst thou, mother, for a moment think,  
That we, thy children, when old age shall shed  
Its bleaching honours on thy hoary head,  
Could from our best of duties ever shrink?”

HENRY KIRKE WHITE.

WE have spoken of Eleanor's “pledge” long since, and sooner was she called upon to fulfil it than any one had expected.

Not more than a year had elapsed since their great sorrow, before this new interest claimed her thoughts.

Scarcely prepared were any of the diminished family circle to respond

willingly, and when Eleanor thought of her mother and Marion as to suffer another stripping, her heart almost failed her.

“ So soon after our *great sorrow*, it seems almost impossible, for the sake of the dear ones at home,” she wrote, on receiving the first intimation of the event.

But the pledge had been given, and her affianced was to go forth to *mission work*.

Joyfully had Eleanor pledged herself to this years before, so there could be no delay beyond the few months in prospect.

Marion's unselfish nature rejoiced in her sister's happiness, but to herself the "rending" in prospect was terrible.

"We cannot wish to detain you for any but our *own* sakes, dearest Eleanor," said Marion, when the first shock of the announcement was over. "It will be the consummation of *your* dearest hopes, and this ought to satisfy us, whatever the smart may be beside."

Eleanor did not now venture anything consolatory in reply, as *once* she would, *on the ground of Marion's promotion* from the "subordinate degree."

The days for playful sallies seemed all past, now! But there was loving

interest and thought busily at work, forwarding the needed preparations, in which the dear mother (though often tearfully) still shared; but it was, truly, a costly gift to yield up *another* child !

“ Dear little Nora will grow up and fill my place,” Eleanor would say, as she looked affectionately at the child of her training, who promised soon to be a sisterly companion.

Her sedate, studious habits seemed already to make her years older than she was, often reminding them all of Montfort.

“ And I shall really be Marion’s helper, soon,” she had said on first hear-

ing the news of her sister's departure ;  
“ but you ought not to go until I am  
*quite* ready to fill your place by becoming  
Marion's ‘ subordinate,’ indeed you  
ought not,” and the young girl looked  
rather reproachfully at her elder sister  
as she spoke.

“ Why, Nora, you see, I am not altogether  
mistress of my own destiny,”  
was all that Eleanor could reply.

It was a brilliant July day that witnessed  
Eleanor's bridal—joyful it could  
scarcely be—there was too deep a  
shadow from the past, and from the  
fact of Eleanor's departure to a foreign  
land—but with attempted cheerfulness.

Marion sought to array her sister for the occasion ; the quiet shade of dove-drab and pure white that formed the bridal dress being admirably in keeping with Eleanor's simple tastes and the life to which she had devoted herself.

Few were the guests invited, for the sweet bride wished only to have "a quiet wedding," but kind Mrs. Beaumont was among the number, and the good Dr. Evans "made time" to run over and see *his favourite* married, and bid farewell. So it was a party of grave guests.

Once, Marion's fortitude almost

gave way, as remembrances of the past crowded upon her, and with almost a gasp she said, "Oh, Nellie, if *only* Herbert and Montfort could have been here!"

It was in truth a tearful party that assembled around the altar rails of the pretty suburban church.

Marion and Nora wept bitterly in spite of all their efforts, and Eleanor herself was tremulous with suppressed emotion, not for *herself*, but for those whom she was to leave so soon. Still, in clear response her marriage vows were plighted, and never had she reason to regret the pledge thus given.

The Communion, which the whole family partook of together that last Sabbath, before Eleanor left her native land, was an ordinance never to be forgotten. Not again were they *all* to drink that cup together on Earth.

And so the loving daughter and sister went forth from the home of which she had been so largely the founder, as well as the solace of all who dwelt there, while through her tears Marion tried to say, the last talk the sisters had together—

“Dearest Nellie, perhaps we *ought* to call *this* ‘dawn,’ for to *you*, at least, I hope it is the dawn of a life-long joy”

(a valedictory wish that has been amply fulfilled.)

“And to you, my darling, will also come not only ‘*dawn*,’ but ‘*day*,’ in God’s good time,” replied her sister.

We must not linger on the “farewells,” so rending for the time to all hearts, nor in detailing how Marion was strengthened to take up her sister’s work, and continue it, with wonderful energy, filling her place also towards the beloved mother with devoted affection; nor how good tidings came from Madeira of the voyagers reaching so far in health and safety.

Eleanor “making a capital sailor,” as

her husband wrote. And how, after eight months interval, glad news reached the now diminished circle, of Eleanor's happiness in her newly-found home, with "fresh interests growing up around her, both in her husband's noble work," and in their little "desert dwelling."

"Perilous journeys and merciful escapes were recounted, too, from time to time, and sweet, gentle Mrs. Heywood was almost a little proud of her fresh title, as the news of a little grandchild reached them, opening up a new channel of interest in her sorrowing heart. And when a little nephew was added, it was to *Marion* almost a resur-

rection of buried hopes. "You will let him be Herbert, and nothing else," she wrote at once to her sister, who, with her husband's full approval, had proposed this name for the child.

Thus sped the first three years of Eleanor's married life, but Mr. Heywood, now far advanced in years, and shaken by the sorrows of the past, had been failing in strength for some time; his wonderful pedestrian powers were diminishing rapidly, so that not unfrequently, in returning from his accustomed walk, he would remark to Marion, "Yes, my child, I am becoming quite the old man now, and

am glad to make good use of my staff."

Then suddenly an attack of the same malady as that which had first cut short his ministerial career proved the "swift messenger" that in one short week bore him hence "to rest with his fathers."

"He has joined our dear ones, dearest, dearest mother," was all that Marion could say in seeking to console that heart thrice stricken, and yet again.

Earth was indeed growing smaller, and the widowed heart turned *heavenward* for comfort more and more—whither most of its earthly treasures were now transplanted. Woe, indeed, for

those who have no such hope of glad reunion !

With devoted love did Marion now give herself unceasingly to the care of her mother. Mr. Heywood's death had deprived the family of a *portion* of the annuity, which was all that remained to them of worldly substance. That settled on Mrs. Heywood alone remained ; but the heart of the noble girl did not lose courage. Advised by friends, she decided with her mother on leaving the scene of so many bereavements.

It was a sad wrench to all, but the sequel proved how wise the suggestion

had been. The free pure air of a hilly locality, amid beautiful scenery, revived Mrs. Heywood's strength, while the spacious residence that Marion ventured upon taking, enabled her to extend her educational plans.

By a gracious Providence these were happily successful, though not *without* difficulties; but the indomitable spirit of old, founded upon a firm reliance on the "God of her fathers," carried her through all.

The thoughtful Nora was truly her sister's "helper," and it was beautiful to see how the two cherished and cared for the "*beloved* mother" as they ever

called her. She was indeed still the sunlight of their home.

Years passed on, and Marion occupied a position of influence in the neighbourhood where her beautiful home was situated.

Once and again it was visited by the early friends of her youth, who now scarcely recognised in the dignified head of *such* a household the youthful Marion Heywood of former years, and her then "infant sister," now the able assistant in her present undertaking.

And in that "home of peace" there was the embryo of *other* beautiful lives taking shape and form under the wise

teachings and Christian influences there surrounding them, of which we may perhaps *some* time be induced to tell.

The bitter bereavements of former years could never be forgotten, with their anniversaries, and on such occasions the mention of her brothers' names would still bring a tide-wave of sorrow over Marion's heart.

But life's work, with its growing interests, was around her, and she had many to care for: Yea, and among them not a few, who like *once* herself, were "children of adversity"—those who through loss of affluence were, as Marion said, "in the most trying posi-

tion of all." Towards the daughters of such, Marion felt a yearning sympathy, and most willingly extended the benefits of her establishment on such terms as *could be given*.

"It is part of my life's special work, Mother dearest," she would say, "to care for these, though it does not tend to 'much riches,' but this I must leave."

The beloved mother's presence and blessing was indeed her chief earthly joy, and to surround her with every possible comfort, Marion's greatest luxury.

"I shall *never* leave you, my mother,"

she would often say, when talking of Eleanor and her little ones. “No, no, I shall stay with you, and be the ‘*good old Aunt*’ for all these nieces and nephews in time to come.”

Yet if we were to reveal a portion of Marion’s secrets, there were not wanting opportunities when *she*, too, might have been a bride.

The calm, happy sunlight now around Mrs. Heywood’s latter days did indeed remind one of that Scripture “At evening-time it shall be light;” and as Marion pursued her path of happy usefulness, she sometimes, when conversing with the “beloved Mother,”

would say, "Yes, Mother, dearest, I think Eleanor's words *have* almost come to pass, and it is not only 'Dawn' but 'Day.'"

THE END.







